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"The Federal Hiring Process: The Long and Winding Road"
Opening Statement
June 7, 2004

The Federal hiring process for most applicants is a long and winding road. The road is so long and winding that the government misses out on some of the best and brightest applicants. This is unacceptable. The Federal Government needs to have a hiring process in place that is more efficient, timely, modern, simple, and consistent, while keeping in-line with the merit system principles. Otherwise, the Federal government will continue to lose out on talented employees who want to serve their country.

There have been many recent studies on the federal hiring process, all of which made interesting findings. I will quickly summarize a few of these findings:

- An October 2001 survey conducted by the Partnership for Public Service revealed:
 "[M]any people view the process of seeking federal employment as a daunting one.
 Three-quarters of non-federal workers say making the application process quicker
 and simpler would be an effective way of attracting talented workers to government."
- A July 2002 report by the National Academy of Public Administration found that Federal "hiring remains a slow and tedious process" and "current hiring methods do not keep pace with the private sector."
- A September 2002 report by the Merit Systems Protections Board said that the Federal hiring process is "overly complex," has "inadequate, time-consuming assessment procedures" and is burdened by "ineffective" hiring authorities.
- In November 2002, OPM recognized in its strategic plan that "there is a general perception that our hiring process takes too long and may not provide well-qualified candidates."
- In the January 2003 Report of the National Commission on the Public Service, the Commission found that "[a] college graduate applying for a federal job confronts a complex and lengthy application demanding far more information than any employer reasonably needs. The very nature of the application deters."
- In GAO's May 2003 report to Congress, GAO noted some key problems with the hiring process:
 - o Outdated and cumbersome procedures are used to define a job and set pay.
 - o Job announcements are unclear and unfriendly.

- o Convening panels and the *manual* rating of applicants is time consuming.
- o A key assessment tool and hiring programs used for entry level positions are ineffective
- Numerical rating and ranking and the "rule of three" limit the choice of applicants and are viewed as ineffective.
- According to the GAO report to be released today: "Within government and the private sector, it has been widely recognized that the federal hiring process is lengthy and cumbersome and hampers agencies' ability to hire the high-quality people they need to achieve their agency goals and missions."
- That same GAO report also reveals that "agencies appear to be making limited use of two new personnel authorities created by Congress in November 2002 and implemented by OPM in June 2003 – category rating and direct hiring authority."
 The report cites the lack of OPM guidance, the lack of flexibility in OPM rules and regulations and the lack of agency policies and procedures as barriers to using these new flexibilities.

These findings are certainly disconcerting. Government agencies too often leave too many talented applicants waiting in limbo for too long, and the job announcements alone discourage top talent from applying. I expect to make real progress to improve this situation. We regularly say the Government can ill afford to lose the so-called "war for talent," but this morning we will be hearing about what is being done right now, and what real actions we can expect in the near future. We will hear from witnesses who I know are actively engaged in initiatives to improve Federal hiring, such as OPM's revamping of its e-recruitment site and its promotion of a 45-day hiring model as well as efforts by the Chief Human Capital Officers Council aimed directly at the hiring process. I very much look forward to hearing from all the witnesses. I thank our witnesses for being here, and I look forward to the discussion.